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**WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION AND SOCIAL POLICY:**  
**A Social Justice Theory and Gender Equity Approach to Work and Family**

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Why is it accepted as fair, equitable and just, in many contexts, that the pursuit of profit should be considered more important than people and families? Why is a gendered division of labor, rewards and constraints at home and in the workplace often considered to be fair? Why is it sometimes considered unfair for new parents to take time out of work for family reasons? Under what circumstances do people contest working practices that disadvantage employees with family responsibilities? How can governments and organizations help to challenge and change what are perceived to be fair allocations of work and family responsibilities and equitable working practices? In this chapter, we argue that social justice theory can be used effectively to answer important questions such as these, concerning progress toward the gender equitable integration of work and family in advanced industrialized societies.

Assumptions and perceptions of what is fair in relation to women's and men's work and family roles have changed over time. For example, in the U.S., mothers' paid employment has become more acceptable, as has fathers' participation in early childcare (Bianchi & Dye, 2001). However, research has documented the limited nature of employer responses to dramatic changes in labor force demographics, family patterns, and cultural expectations concerning appropriate roles for men and women in society. Some employers implement work-family or flexible working policies, but there is usually an "implementation gap," that is, policies are not reflected in practice, particularly in the context of prevailing gendered organizational cultures (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002; Friedman & Johnson, 1997; Gerson & Jacobs, 2001; Haas & Hwang, 1995; S. Lewis, 1997; 2001; Perlow, 2002; Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher & Pruitt, 2001).

Barnett (1999, p. 44) maintains that workplaces remain organized around a work-life model that reflects "dated and inaccurate understandings about women, men and the complex realities of work-life matters." She argues that a new model for work-life integration is needed, based on

the beliefs that (i) work and family are inextricably linked, (ii) there are positive impacts of work-life integration, and (iii) men as well as women are responsible for family care-giving. In addition to providing a full array of family-responsive supports and programs (like childcare subsidies, paid family leave, flextime), this new model challenges contemporary forms of work organization by focusing on productivity rather than "face time," offering employees autonomy in how work is performed so they can adjust work to fit family needs. Collaborative interactive action research (Rapoport et al., 2001) in private corporations has been successful in revealing the gendered assumptions that underlie workplace practices and in demonstrating that it is possible to push a "dual agenda" promoting gender equity and workplace effectiveness when seeking to bring about fundamental change in working practices. However, this approach has not been widely adopted. The notion that working practices that are fair and equitable - in terms of gender justice - can also enhance workplace effectiveness appears to be counter intuitive in many contexts.

What might prompt corporations to move toward a "work-life systems model" with a focus on gender equitable "win-win" solutions? Pressure on corporations to change is increasing, from employees with family responsibilities, unions keen on recruiting a new generation of members, and human resource professionals attentive to the changing world outside the workplace and its implications for employee recruitment and retention (Godard, 2002; Goodstein, 1994). In this chapter, we draw attention to the fact that corporations exist within a wider social and political context, wherein particular cultural beliefs are reinforced about gender, other forms of social justice, and citizen entitlements to support for family care-giving. We are particularly interested in how governments may be able to move corporations toward supportive work-life practices and cultures that promote work-life integration for both women and men who exhibit a shared sense

of responsibility for family care.

We focus in this chapter on government policy because this reflects a society's "political structures, policy traditions, social norms and power relations" (Godard, 2002, p. 252). We recognize that work organizations can affect governments, that multiple levels of government can be involved, and that it can be difficult for governments to alter the traditional rules, norms, practices, and beliefs that underlie most employer policies, especially when these are deeply embedded. Inevitably, employees will have to address some of these barriers as individuals and within families. But as long as the focus is on work-family policies that are organized at the employer level, especially in departments reserved for this purpose such as "human resources," they are unlikely to be offered to workers at all levels and will remain marginalized with limited impact on the prevailing gendered model of work and separation of work and family spheres.

We propose that a greater understanding of the impact of government policy on corporate work-life practices and cultures, as well as on families and communities, can be achieved through adoption of the conceptual framework of social justice theory. This approach can be useful in understanding work-life integration at the family, workplace, societal and international levels. We focus particularly on how government policies can affect individuals' sense of entitlement to support for integrating work and family and hence increase institutional pressures on employers to act in ways that are perceived as just in this respect. We emphasize the socially constructed nature of justice perceptions, and that ideas of what is fair and taken for granted as just in one context may be contested in another. Although our focus is on gender justice we inevitably touch on some other justice issues as these cannot easily be disentangled.

The issue of how paid work and family care-giving responsibilities are to be combined is a central concern of a society's "gender contract," the "unspoken contract that regulates the

gendered division of labor at different levels and in different contexts" (Tyrkkö, 2002, p. 110). According to O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver (1999, p. 10), "Gender relations cannot be understood apart from the state, politics and policy; states influence gender relations, and are in turn influenced by gender relations." Consequently, explicit attention is paid to how government policies can influence men's as well as women's sense of entitlement to family supportive work policies and practices, and to what extent state support for work-life integration reflects, contributes to, and/or undermines the cultural construction of gender contracts within specific policy contexts. Using Sweden as a case study, we demonstrate that social policy can influence sense of gender justice at a societal level, though this is not necessarily reflected in a simple way at the workplace level. The chapter ends with a discussion of directions for future research on gender equitable work-family integration and social policy, using social justice theory.

### **WHAT IS A SOCIAL JUSTICE PERSPECTIVE?**

What is justice? This can be considered from a philosophical or a phenomenological perspective. The former, which searches for consensus, is primarily the concern of lawyers and policy makers, while social scientists take a phenomenological approach, asking why some acts are perceived to be just and others not, in given contexts. Perceived justice according to this approach is one means by which individuals make sense of their social world. A social justice approach is concerned with perceptions of fairness in the ways in which people are treated in different social institutions and contexts. It is recognized that there are no absolute definitions of what is fair and just, but rather that definitions and perceptions of justice are socially constructed, usually by processes of social comparison, within specific contexts, and therefore differ across time and place, in families, workplaces, societies, and internationally. According to this approach, treatment is unfair when observers perceive it to be unfair. In this chapter we focus on

gender justice, but a broader social justice perspective takes account of multiple forms of diversity and the ways in which diversity (including social class) affects perceptions of fairness (Colquitt, Conlon, Weeson, Porter & Ng, 2001). Although perceptions of justice are subjective, they are developed within national contexts where norms about what is fair and just may be incorporated into social policy. A social justice perspective predicts that government policies can influence beliefs about what is fair and just, by putting pressure on employers to consider work and family needs of men and women in their organizations.

It is useful here to draw on institutional theory that focuses our attention on the "institutional environments within which employers act" (Godard, 2002, p. 249) and what might be sources of pressure on institutionalized norms and practices in work organizations. These pressures include changing social expectations as reflected in laws and regulations, which are often associated "with a shift in interests and power that supports and legitimates existing arrangements" (Dacin, Goodstein & Scott, 2002). Up to now, research based on institutional theory has focused on why workplaces introduce policies, while paying little attention to the "implementation gap" and actual working practice (Lewis, 2003). We use a social justice approach to focus on the (perceived) fairness of policies and practices as they are put into every day use.

One reason why a social justice approach to work and family is important is that it illuminates the relationship between perceived equity or inequity and motivation for change. If a situation is perceived as fair and just, then there is little motivation to seek change, even though it may seem inequitable to actors not involved in that situation. Social action to effect change is more likely when actors feel unfairly treated or define a situation as inequitable. Arguably, some sense of inequity has fuelled the efforts of those calling for greater work-family integration. Insofar as government policies influence perceptions of what is fair and just, they have great

potential to drive change. In the next section we discuss some of the principles of social justice and examine their applicability to issues of gender justice in the interdependent spheres of family and work and wider societal contexts.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### *Sense of Entitlement*

A distinction can be made between supports that are expected and regarded as entitlements or rights, and those that are regarded as favors that have to be negotiated and/or reciprocated. An important element of social justice theory, and one that is central to our analysis, is the concept of "sense of entitlement." This is used to denote a set of beliefs and feelings about rights and entitlements, or legitimate expectations, based on what is perceived to be fair and equitable (Bylsma & Major, 1994; Lewis, 1996; Major, 1993). It is different from, albeit influenced by, actual legal or other objective entitlements (Lewis & Lewis, 1997). Workers' limited subjective sense of entitlement to be able to work in ways which are compatible with family demands can create low expectations for employer and state policies, over-gratitude for any support available, and a reluctance to demand further changes (Lewis, 1996; Lewis & Lewis, 1997), while a strong sense of entitlement to support contributes to actions for change.

Sense of entitlement is theorized as determined by social comparison processes (Lerner, 1987), influenced by social context, cultural ideology (Lewis, 1996), as well as social policy context (Lewis & Smithson, 2001). It is constructed on the basis of social, normative and feasibility comparisons (Lewis & Lewis, 1996; Major, 1987; Major, 1993). Judgments about what is fair or equitable are made on the basis of normative comparisons with others who are assumed to be similar to oneself (Bylsma & Major, 1994; Major, 1993). For example, women's reporting of relative satisfaction with an unequal division of family labor has been explained by



their tendency to compare themselves with other women, rather than with their male partners (Hochschild, 1989; Major, 1993; Thompson, 1991). Men's satisfaction with an unequal domestic division of domestic labor has also been explained by "within-gender comparisons," to other men, rather than with their female partners (Ferree, 1990; LaRossa, 1988). Perceptions of what is feasible also influence sense of entitlement. If it is not constructed as feasible to have paid leave for new parents, for example, employees will not expect this, or will be reluctant to take it up if it is available. If women think it is not feasible for their partners to reduce over-time work in order to participate more in family work, then they won't press for change.

Research on sense of entitlement has consistently shown that men and women feel entitled to different outcomes in employment, where, for example, women may feel less entitled to higher rates of pay or other rewards (Bylsma & Major, 1994; Desmaris & Curtis, 1997) and in family life, where women often express satisfaction with an unequal division of labor (Burgoyne & Lewis, 1994; Major, 1993; Reichle, 1996; Wilkie, Ferree, & Ratcliff, 1998). Thus, gender influences what is perceived as normative, appropriate, and feasible. When motherhood is constructed as a woman's primary role, employment is often constructed as something extra, which women take on for their own satisfaction and independence, even if their income is essential for the family (Lewis, Kagan & Heaton, 1999). In this context, fathers' participation in family care is constructed as "help" rather than a shared responsibility, especially when breadwinning is considered their primary role (Hochschild, 1989). Hence, people with traditional gender expectations and/or living in more traditionally gendered societies will feel less entitled to support to enable them to work when they have family responsibilities, and men will feel less entitled to employer support for involvement in caring. Gender roles thus prescribe different entitlements for women and men in the home and in employment.

### *Justice Principles*

Three principles have been identified which may be used to reach judgments about what is fair - equality, equity, and need (Deutsch, 1985). These principles may be invoked by different individuals and in different contexts at family, workplace societal, or international levels. In this chapter, we focus on how these principles are related to gender justice and work-life integration, although they apply to other forms of justice, including the elimination of class privilege. The equality principle is the assumption that everybody should be treated the same regardless of performance or need (e.g., everyone should have equal access to flexible work). The equity principle relates outcomes to input, such that people should be treated according to merit (e.g., flexible working options should be available to those with a good performance record). The need principle argues that people should be treated according to needs (e.g., parents have greater need for flexibility- though often conceptualized in gendered terms).

Disagreements can occur when people use different justice principles to judge fairness (Young, 1999). The extent to which workplace policy focuses on equality, equity and/or need may influence justice perceptions and sense of entitlement. For example, in some Swedish companies, only white-collar fathers have the right to determine their starting and stopping times at work, regardless of performance record or need, making it possible for them to share child care responsibilities with their partners (Haas & Hwang, 1995). In this situation, blue-collar fathers in the same companies may perceive this situation to be unfair, using the equality and needs principles as justification.

Societies vary in terms of the extent to which government policy is based on the justice principles of equality, equity and need. In only a few societies (such as Sweden), is the equality principle a bedrock principle of social policy, going so far as to provide the same sort of welfare

benefits (e.g., child allowances, paid parental leave, subsidized daycare) to all, regardless of income level (Haas, 1996). Policy in the UK tends to be needs based, although the needs (for example of single parents) may be determined by government. Few societies have engaged in policymaking efforts prioritizing the needs of working parents and their children; however, this is beginning to receive attention in some international organizations.

### ***Social and Organizational Justice Processes***

Theories that focus on the processes whereby people make judgments about what is fair in specific contexts provide an additional framework for examining work-family issues. These processes are usually considered in workplace contexts, but also have implications for gender justice in the family and at wider societal levels. Three major forms of justice processes are described in the literature: judgments about distributive justice, procedural justice, and interpersonal justice (Cropanzano, 1993; Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Greenberg, 1990; Thibault & Walker, 1975; Young, 1999).

Perceptions of distributive justice are related to satisfaction with valued outcomes in relation to perceived input (e.g., related to hard work or financial input) (Folger & Konovsky, 1989; Major, 1987). To understand what seems fair, it is important to know what people desire as outcomes, the extent to which they feel they deserve these outcomes and the extent to which they perceive that these desires have been met. For example, a male worker might say that it is very important to him that his job provides flexibility for him to combine work and family responsibilities. He may feel that he deserves this flexibility because of his loyalty and high quality work that he perceives to be greater than others workers' input. He may judge that his own workplace does not actually provide flexibility and would therefore feel unfairly treated.

Procedural justice is perceived to occur when the decision-making methods for determining

outcomes are perceived to be fair. One indication that the method is fair is that those concerned have had an opportunity to convey their opinions (or had a "voice"). An unequal outcome can still be considered fair if the procedure that determined it appeared to be fair. For example, we would predict that people who could voice their needs for parental leave to employers or government decision making bodies, and are satisfied that their needs are heard and taken into account, might feel that the outcome regarding leave-taking entitlement is fair, even if the actual decision about the outcome went against their goal. The trouble with making leave-taking something that has to be negotiated with employers is that some employees are going to be in a better position to voice their concerns than others, e.g., as valued or high-level employees, a shortcoming social policy change could solve.

Interpersonal justice refers to "social conduct with implications for other people's dignity" (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998, p. 29). For example, employees seeking the right to reduced work hours might feel they have been justly treated if the human resource director listened to their request politely, and offered truthful information about the feasibility of such a work arrangement, even if the request was rejected.

Again, processes of social comparison are important. These judgments are made in relation to social referents. For example, based on equity theory (Adams, 1965), it is argued that notions of distributive justice are formulated by comparing perceptions of one's own ratio of inputs and outcomes with the ratio of inputs to outcomes of others. If people feel undervalued (or to a lesser extent overvalued) there is perceived inequity. People get less upset if they feel overvalued (Hegtvedt, 1993).

Much of the research on these processes of reaching justice judgments has been at the organizational level (Colquitt et al., 2001). In the next section we consider the applications of

this conceptual framework at family, workplace, societal and international levels.

### **LEVELS OF ANALYSIS**

Individual employees' attitudes and behavior in regard to labor market participation and family care-giving are influenced by the cultures, policies and practices of work organizations and by expectations and circumstances in the family. Work organizations and families in turn are embedded in a larger national context, where ideas about gender, family, and work are socially constructed, and where social policy tends to support the society's existing "gender contract" and tendency to separate the social spheres of work and family. We argue that progress toward work-life integration for men and women will continue to be limited, if we rely on individuals and families to negotiate this, even if individual exemplary companies establish supportive policies and programs. Therefore, we need to examine the impact of social policies designed to promote integration of work and family on families, organizations, and other social institutions, and to recognize that progress towards enhanced equity will require changes at the interrelated levels of family, workplace, society, and international community.

#### ***Perceived Justice in the Family***

Gender equity has been defined as a fair distribution of rewards and responsibilities among men and women (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1965). There is much evidence that despite women's increasing involvement in the world of paid work and decreasing involvement in unpaid domestic work, men's contribution to family work has not reached the level of women's (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer & Robinson, 2000; Ciscel, Sharp & Heath, 2000; Gager, 1998; Hawkins, Marshall, & Meiners, 1995; Kluwer, Heesink & Van De Vliert, 2002; Major, 1993; Mikula, 1998.) and that women often express satisfaction with what might be regarded as inequitable and certainly unequal roles (Smith, Gager, & Morgan, 1998; Wilkie et al., 1998). Women appear to

have a lower sense of entitlement than men to equity in the family. Why should this be?

Discussion of fairness and justice perceptions at the family level tends to focus on distributive justice in terms of the division of domestic labor, care-giving, and income generation in two parent families, and to be based primarily on a subjective equity principle. That is, those who contribute more (input) in income terms are perceived as entitled to do less in terms of family work (Thompson, 1991). However, if work performed mainly by men or traditionally “masculine” skills are more highly valued and paid than female dominated work or “feminine” skills, which is common in deeply gendered organizations and societies, then most men will earn more than their partners. This, in turn, influences perceptions of fairness concerning what each partner should be contributing to the distribution of labor.

Women tend to select referents for social comparison that support their lower sense of entitlement to equity in relation to family work (Kluwer et al., 2002; Major, 1993). For example, they often compare their situation with that of other heterosexual women rather than with male partners or with women living in lesbian households. A study of lesbian families found that these women found innovative ways to share care work with a greater fluidity between their employment and domestic responsibilities, as they were not constrained by gendered assumptions within their work and personal lives (Dunne, 2000).

If the principle of equality rather than equity is evoked (i.e., if both partners are working, so family work should be distributed equally regardless of income), or if partners evoke different principles, this can contribute to family conflict (Frisco & Williams, 2003; Greenstein, 1996; Grote & Clark, 2001). The gender earnings gap can significantly affect perceptions of equity (or in some, cases equality) in family work. Social policies have the potential to play a strong indirect role in shaping the family context for the distribution of work and family roles. These

concern women's employment, such as anti-discrimination and equal pay for comparable work policies, tax policies that reward secondary earners in households, paid, flexible parental leave, and high-quality, affordable care for young children. Research on decision making and power relations within the family (Benjamin, 2001; Zimmerman, 2003; Zvonkovic, Greaves, Schmiege & Hall, 1996) focuses more on procedural and interpersonal justice perceptions, implicitly or explicitly. This research addresses questions of how each partner contributes to decisions about work and family responsibilities (procedural justice) and is respectful of their partner's views (interpersonal justice). However, wider societal values can obscure the need for explicit decision making procedures. Because care-giving is socially constructed as women's primary responsibility, mothers are often perceived as having to make decisions about whether and how much to work outside the home and how to fit this in with childcare, whereas male family roles as providers and the assumed secondary nature of their care-giving roles are taken for granted.

For change in roles and expectations to take place, it is important to articulate gender beliefs in order to challenge them, but this is not always easy to achieve, even among egalitarian families, in a context of little societal support for genuine equity (Zvonkovic et al, 1996). Research suggests that individuals with traditional gender attitudes engage less in cross-gender comparisons, and consequently are less likely to perceive unfairness in the division of labor or procedures whereby this is established (DeMaris & Longmore, 1996; Greenstein, 1996). In some national contexts, however, government policies can help to articulate and challenge traditional gender beliefs and norms, as Sweden has done by setting aside two months of paid parental leave for fathers (Haas & Hwang, 2000).

### ***Perceived Justice in the Workplace***

At the workplace level, perceptions of justice are also mediated by sense of entitlement and

social comparison. This can be illustrated in relation to two examples; backlash against work-family benefits and the perceived equity of reduced hours work.

***Backlash.*** When work-family policies are implemented in organizations, they are often perceived to be targeted at parents of young children (mostly mothers). A U.S. study of parental leave shows that colleagues who are similar in terms of current needs or who view themselves as possibly having similar needs in the future, are the most likely to be supportive of colleagues taking leave (Grover, 1991). Thus, co-workers' attitudes appear to be determined by social comparison processes and their ability to empathize with the person using informal or formal flexibility to fit in family demands. As mothers more often than fathers take up, or are expected to take up, such initiatives, this becomes an issue of gender justice as well as equity between parents and childfree employees. In contexts where co-workers do not have similar non-work demands (either because they do not have children or other caring responsibilities or because they delegate them to partners, paid help or others), nor plan to have children or take on other care-giving responsibilities, this can create resentment, or “backlash,” if it is felt that some parents are receiving special treatment (Young , 1999).

Judgments about whether work-family policies and practices are fair are likely to vary according to perceptions of outcomes (distributive justice), perceived fairness of processes (procedural justice - e.g., if work teams collaborated in their development), and management sensitivity and support in administering procedures (interpersonal justice). Employees without immediate caring responsibilities, who feel they are expected to do more work to cover for others, are likely to perceive distributive injustice and this may be compounded by perceived procedural injustice if they are not consulted on benefit provision.

Perceived justice is also influenced by the justice principles invoked, i.e. equity, equality or



need principles. If work-family policies are perceived to be targeted only at parents, the justice principle would be one of need, but colleagues are just as likely to use equality or equity principles in deciding what is fair. If they use equality principles, there will be an expectation that everyone should have access to the same or equivalent benefits, that is, flexible working opportunities should be available to all. Arguably, this is a fair expectation. However, these principles are not always clearly articulated and employees and their managers may not invoke the same principle, leading to perceptions of unfairness. Disputes about fairness can exacerbate work-family conflict for those with family responsibilities and have important implications for the use of employer policies and the ways in which they are introduced.

There is some debate about the extent of work-family backlash (Young, 1999). There have been few systematic studies of employees' sense of fairness about company-based work-family benefits, although Parker and Allen (1999) found that working parents of younger children are more likely to label company work-family benefits such as flextime, parental leave, and job-sharing as fair, compared to other workers, even those with older children, as did female employees in comparison to male employees. Their research also alerts us to the importance of considering race and ethnicity as factors influencing justice perceptions; in their study, minority employees were more likely than white employees to view work-family benefits as fair. Parker and Allen suggested that this might be due to minorities' greater acceptance of other human resource policies related to diversity, general sensitivity towards issues related to discrimination, and greater feelings of obligation for family responsibilities. This illustrates the need for a social justice perspective to consider ways in which other forms of diversity, such as race and class, interact with gender to contribute to perceptions of what is fair in the workplace and elsewhere.

National diversity is also important. Significantly, most of the evidence regarding backlash

comes from research in the U.S. and UK, where family care is constructed as an individual rather than a collective responsibility. We know less about such processes in countries such as Sweden or Norway, where family care is constructed as a collective rather than an individual responsibility. In these contexts, governments can play an important role in developing a cultural discourse that prevents backlash, if, for example, policymakers portray policies for working parents as fair because these policies in fact support children, whom most agree are entitled to and need societal support.

***Reduced hours, rewards and entitlements.*** Other possible issues of injustice in relation to work and family are not articulated because of low expectations and sense of entitlement, particularly among those who work less than the socially constructed norm of full time. Policies and practices related to working reduced hours illustrate this issue. In the UK, for example, some employers have introduced reduced hours schemes whereby employees, including those in senior management, work less than full time (e.g., four days a week or one hour a day less than the standard) in order to fulfil dependent care or other obligations. Pay is reduced accordingly but benefits are retained proportionately (Lewis, 2001; Stamworth, 1999).

However, many senior people working reduced hours report accomplishing as much as they had when working full time (Lewis, 2001; Lewis et al, 2001; Raabe, 1998), albeit for less pay and with fewer opportunities for promotion. Thus a "long hours culture," with the valuing of face time rather than output, reduces individuals' sense of entitlement to receive full rewards amongst those who complete work in a shorter time. Put another way, full-time working colleagues are rewarded for working inefficiently, based on a justice principle of equity which measures input on terms of time rather than effort, or of equality, which idealises standard hours, regardless of effort or need. Many employees working reduced hours perceive the irony of this, though not the injustice, and do not feel entitled to challenge it because of the pervasiveness of

cultural assumptions about working time (Lewis, 2001).

Again, social policy context, particularly in relation to working time and family time, may influence sense of entitlement to reduce working time without being constructed as a second class worker. This is apparent in Sweden, where the majority of mothers in the labor force work "long part-time," around 30 hours a week, while receiving full benefits. This entitlement, codified in law applicable to parents of children under school-age, appears to still be gendered, since only a small percentage fathers work part-time. The Netherlands provides an example of a society that is attempting to "de-gender" part-time work as an entitlement of working parents. Employees have considerable latitude in adjusting their work hours to suit individual needs without being overtly penalized through loss of income, pension rights, or career prospects. Parental leave can also be taken part-time, helping to institutionalize part-time work. From 1985 to 1995, the percentage of Dutch men who worked part-time more than doubled, from 8% to 17% (Yeandle, 2001).

### **Perceived Justice in Societal/National Contexts**

*Welfare state regimes.* Perceptions of what is just and fair in both the family and the workplace and their interface are constructed within wider societal contexts and influenced by normative assumptions about relative responsibilities for the integration of paid work and family. For example, in some countries the integration of paid work and personal life is perceived as an individual responsibility, with a role for employers if market forces permit, while elsewhere governments collectivize care by providing tax-funded childcare programs (e.g., paid parental leave and subsidized public childcare).

Each government's approach to helping citizens integrate work and family is based on deeply embedded assumptions about gender, justice, families, and work. Indeed, Knijn and Kremer (1997, p. 330) argue: "modern welfare states have shaped the needs and rights of

caregivers and care receivers ... in ways that contribute to gender inequality in citizenship rights. There can be disputes about what is "fair," in terms of whether care is (i) a private or a public responsibility, (ii) unpaid or paid, (iii) structured to contribute to dependence or independence of caregivers and care receivers, and (4) prioritizing the rights of care receivers or caregivers.

Haas (2003) piloted a typology focusing on the caring dimension of welfare states, in relation to parenthood (based on Appelbaum, Bailey, Berg & Kalleberg, 2002). This distinguishes nations in regard to whether childcare is considered a public responsibility and the extent to which policies and provisions - such as fathers' and mothers' access to flexibly scheduled work, high-quality affordable public daycare, and extended, flexible, and paid parental leave - aim to redistribute responsibility for childcare between mothers and fathers. This approach seems congruent with J. Lewis's (1997, p. 160) call to evaluate the fairness of gender regimes in terms of the "two main questions for feminists concerning the provision of unpaid work: (i) how to value it and (ii) how to share it more equally between men and women."

According to Haas' (2003) typology, societies can fall into one of four types:

(1) "privatized care model" - government policymakers consider it fair that caring is done primarily by mothers or extended family members; consequently, parents have little access to flexibly scheduled work, public daycare, and paid parental leave. (Example: the U.S.)

(2) "family-centered care model" where policymaking has been shaped by a traditional religious heritage, a strong commitment to preservation of the traditional family, or a concern about declining birth rates. Government policymakers believe it is fair to help women sequence care work and paid employment or to work part-time, for example by providing universal pre-school for ages three and up. (Example: France.)

(3) "market-oriented care model," where strongly held values concerning the importance of

mothers devoting themselves to home and children and the notion of individual rather than public responsibility for families has historically resulted in a lack of collective support for working parents (e.g., little publicly funded daycare). Policymakers now recognize women's contributions to labor market productivity, and think it is fair to encourage employers to introduce support such as daycare, based on a "business-case" argument. (Example: the Netherlands.)

(4) "valued care model," most evident in the Scandinavian nations, which have come a long way toward the goal of integrating women into the labor market and in providing comprehensive support systems for working parents, including publicly funded childcare and well-developed parental leave systems that offer fathers incentives to take leave. Sweden has gone the furthest, and thus receives special attention here, particularly because it also demonstrates how there can be an "implementation gap" between social policy and workplace practices.

***The case of Sweden.*** Sweden is distinctive in the extent to which social policy has shaped individuals' sense of entitlement to equitable integration of work and family responsibilities. Care of young children is viewed as a shared responsibility of parents and the state. Parents feel entitled to time for care (e.g., through parental leave and part-time work) and to high quality low-cost public daycare and after school care (Leira, 2002). Sufficient daycare places now exist for all children whose parents desire them. Access to parental care and high quality daycare are also seen as democratic rights of children (Haas, 1996). All parents have the right to paid parental leave consisting of 13 months of absence from work that can be taken on a part-time or full-time basis, with 80% compensation of usual pay and up to 60 days off per year per child with 70% pay, to care for a sick child. Two nontransferable months of parental leave are reserved for fathers and two for mothers, to give families strong incentive for fathers to take leave.

There is interest in "transcending not just the gendered division of paid work but also of unpaid work and family care" (Leira, 2002, p. 23). Since men became entitled to take paid parental leave in 1974, a series of public campaigns and legislative changes have successfully increased men's use of parental leave and their sense of entitlement to involvement in early childcare. Parental leave legislation "challenges conventional wisdom that has presumed the general 'right' of fathers to be exempted from prolonged periods as carers of children, and taken mothers as the 'natural' carers" (Leira, 2002, p. 84). Other nations have offered fathers paid parental leave as long as has Sweden, but none have tried so continuously to re-educate the population that children have rights to father care and that fathers should have the right to be absent from work to care for children.

Despite Swedish policymakers' commitment to gender equality, it has not been realized. Mothers still spend more hours in housework and childcare than fathers do, work in a highly sex-segregated labor market at lower status jobs in the public sector, earn less than men, more often than not work part-time, and take the vast majority of parental leave days available. The gendered usage of the most publicized instrument for gender equality, parental leave, makes a strong case, according to Parbring (2002, p. 8), that "women and men are [still] parents on different terms....A father can choose to take parental leave while a mother is expected to do so." Moreover, Swedish men as well as women experience work-family conflict (Allard, Haas & Hwang, 2001; Johansson, 2002)

Sweden therefore provides an interesting setting to understand the "implementation gap," since there is an obvious disconnect between social policy and workplace practice. Advocates of gender equality have begun to realize that further progress depends on changing gendered workplace norms and practices. Although Swedish policymakers use the equality principle of

social justice when developing equal employment opportunity and parental leave policy, it seems evident that Swedish work organizations do not yet all agree on this standard.

Nevertheless, institutional pressures from government can bring about change, albeit slowly, in some companies. In a study of six west coast Swedish companies employing mainly men in traditional occupations, Haas, Allard & Hwang (2002) found that many more fathers were interested in taking paid parental leave and sharing childcare than had in fact been able to do so. But this varied significantly by company; where organizational culture had been developed around the "caring ethic," fathers were more likely to take leave. Co-workers were reported as more supportive of fathers' leave taking than supervisors and top management, and when co-workers were supportive, fathers were more likely to take leave. However, it was within the workgroup that norms related to the "long hours culture," were most apparent, having the potential to affect perceptions of fairness in an organizational context. Fathers who reported that their work group operated on the basis of a long hours culture (where putting in hours was more important than performance and was the main route to advancement), were less likely to take parental leave than fathers whose groups were based on other work norms. If long hours are perceived as necessary, sense of entitlement to leave is reduced even in the Swedish ideological context. The need for face time reflects gendered organizational assumptions, overvaluing the capacity to be constantly available at the workplace and undervaluing skill such as relational skills, often associated with women, which may prevent the necessity to put in long hours, working in crisis mode (Rapoport et al, 2001).

Progress toward the goal of work-family integration has not been affected by economic concerns. However, fathers' reluctance and/or inability to take advantage of policies designed to promote work-family integration like paid parental leave suggests that there are important

clashes between perceptions of justice in the family and in regard to the rights of mothers, fathers and children, and perceptions of justice in workplaces, including what it might take to be economically profitable in an increasing cut-throat economic environment.

***National variations in sense of entitlement.*** Do different welfare state models and specific social policies impact on what is perceived to be fair and just in the integration of paid work and family? A study of young adults in five European countries demonstrated that sense of entitlement to support for reconciling work and family varies among the participants in different national contexts, reflecting the gender contracts underpinning welfare states and the gender related values on which they are based (Lewis & Smithson, 2001). Participants in Sweden and Norway, where welfare states are based on an equality contract, demonstrated a higher sense of entitlement to support from the state and also for employer flexibility in terms of working hours. Conversely, most participants in Ireland, Portugal and the UK, with more traditional gender contracts and social policy, expected less from both the state and employer, emphasizing instead self or family reliance. Sense of entitlement to support for reconciling work and family was particularly low among the Irish, where public policy reflected the most traditional values in relation to work and family, especially motherhood. Consistent with previous research (e.g. Reichle, 1996), sense of entitlement to work and family support remained gendered among all these young adults, but less so in Sweden and Norway where there is strong state support for men as well as women to combine work and family roles.

Two salient factors affecting sense of entitlement within these national contexts were the ability to make comparisons with social policies in other European countries, and the perception of economic benefits of workplace work-family arrangements to employers. Both can be explained by their impact on perceptions of feasibility of work-family supports, a crucial aspect



of the social comparison process that underpins perceptions of social justice (Lerner, 1987).

Awareness of supportive social policies in other countries permits social comparisons that demonstrate the feasibility of such provisions and also highlights the fact that such policies are normative in some contexts.

Perception of economic benefits to employers, or the “business case” for “family friendly” workplace policies (Bevan, Dench, Tamkin & Cummings, 1999; Galinsky & Johnson, 1998), also enhances perceptions of feasibility and enables participants to construct employer supports as entitlements rather than favors. The impact of the “business case” on sense of entitlement in some contexts suggests that many of these young adults took the employer’s perspective, even to the extent of privileging employers’ assumed needs over their own. However, the sense of injustice expressed by women in Sweden and the UK when they felt that their maternity leave entitlements had been undermined by temporary employment contracts, suggests that employer interests become less salient in the construction of what are rights or favors when sense of entitlement to statutory support is well established. Thus economic and labor market factors interact with social policy context to influence sense of entitlement to work-family support, indicating the importance of looking beyond immediate environments in examining and explaining sense of entitlement to support for work and family life.

These findings provide evidence that national social policies can indeed contribute to enhanced feelings of personal control in relation to the reconciliation of work and family and also suggest that communicating well-established policies such as childcare provisions and progressive parental leave regulations to those in countries with fewer provisions may increase sense of entitlement. As violation of perceived entitlement can motivate changes in behavior, awareness of public policies elsewhere in Europe may lead to demands or campaigns for more

state supports for work and family in countries with fewer state supports. Communicating well-established policies such as childcare provisions and progressive parental leave regulations to those in countries with fewer provisions may increase sense of entitlement. For policy change to be effective, however, it must also address wider societal values, as state support both contributes to and is affected by the cultural construction of the gender contract.

### ***Social Justice at the International Level***

With increasing globalization, we need to be concerned about the wider international context that can both support and undermine social policies for integrating work and family in equitable ways. On the positive side, international organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, and the International Labour Organization can influence work-family policy development, while on the negative side, the globalization process and especially the hunt for cheap labor with minimal social protection can undermine social policy or even render it irrelevant.

To begin with the positive, both the United Nations' Beijing Platform for Action and the European Union promote an active and visible policy of "mainstreaming" a gender perspective in all policies and programs, so that before decisions are made, analysis is made of the effects on women and men respectively (Booth & Bennett, 2002; Woodward, 2003). Many governments and international organizations have assumed that mainstreaming simply means putting into place policies that will promote women's equal opportunity in the labor market, along the lines of the equality principle of justice (i.e., everybody should be treated the same) or the equity principle (i.e., people should be treated according to merit). However, this approach has been criticized with reasoning related to perceptions of distributive justice (it does not go far enough toward the valued outcome). According to mainstreaming advocates, mainstreaming should be

much more radically transformative, involving all aspects of social policymaking, including the work-family interface; the goal should be: "a deliberate and systematic approach to integrating a gender perspective into analysis, procedures and policies" (Woodward, 2003, p. 68). Such integration requires that "gender issues escape the women's policy ghetto" (Woodward, 2003, p. 70), to relate to men as well as women. Calls for gender mainstreaming are also implicit calls for procedural justice, since it is assumed that those with a stake in bringing about gender equality should have a "voice" in policymaking.

The UN and EU have established other policies designed to influence the direction of national policy involving working families. For example, the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child emphasizes the importance of parental sharing of work and family responsibilities and society's responsibility for providing adequate childcare, with article 18-3 which advises, "State parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child-care services and facilities" (Wolcott & Glezer, 1995, p. 145).

The International Labour Organization, founded in 1919 to promote social justice and national and international peace, has established a number of written "conventions" which member states are encouraged to adopt, designed mainly to promote employment opportunity, safe working conditions, and social security. For some time, the ILO has urged that governments continue to develop legislation supporting affirmative action, which is seen as an important strategy for achieving social justice for women and minorities in the labor market (Loutfi, 2001). More recently, the ILO has been concerned about how women's traditional responsibility for early childcare is an obstacle to equal employment opportunity for women. ILO Convention #156, titled "Workers with Family Responsibilities," urges nations to "make it an aim of national policy to enable persons with family responsibilities to exercise their right to obtain or engage in

employment without being subject to discrimination, and to the extent possible, without conflict between their employment and family responsibilities "(Wolcott & Glezer, 1995, p. 139).

In the European Union, the treaties that bind member states are largely concerned with creating a single economic market primarily for the benefit of employers, but it is acknowledged that economic and social progress must go hand in hand. Thus issues surrounding the rights of workers have been given serious consideration in the interests of social justice. The EU has implemented some forceful Directives with which member states must comply, relating to the reconciliation of employment and family (a plank of its gender equality program).

EU Directives are the result of agreements between member states, as well as negotiation between employer and employee representatives, to ensure perceptions of procedural justice and feasibility. They include, among others, a Directive on the rights of part-time workers and a parental leave directive. The latter required all member states to grant mothers and fathers in the labor force at least three months of unpaid parental leave as an individual nontransferable right. Men were included to encourage a more equal sharing of childcare responsibilities (Haas, 2003). While the parental leave directive did not dramatically challenge laws already in place in member states or substantially improve EU parents' access to parental leave, at least four nations (including Italy, Luxembourg Portugal, and the UK) were put on notice that the EU would begin infringement proceedings in the Court of Justice for their failure to comply with the parental leave directive. This threat led to the establishment of parental leave policies in all four nations.

Cross-national variations in parental leave policy among EU member states reflect and contribute to national ideologies' concerns with gender justice and definitions of what constitutes "equality," especially in regard to caring for family members. Membership in EU puts institutional pressure on governments and employers and provides new social referents

influencing perceptions of what is normative and feasible (Lewis & Smithson, 2001). It is especially noteworthy that until Finland and Sweden joined the community in 1995, progress toward mandating parental leave in EU had stalled. As the Union doubles with the admission of fifteen more states, many of which had progressive parental leave policies under Communism, albeit with little take up by men in practice, new social comparisons may develop.

On the negative front, there are supranational forces that affect perceptions of social justice and thereby undermine the efforts of individuals, corporations, and governments to promote gender equitable work-family integration. The most formidable is "globalization," defined by Chow (2003, p. 444) as "the complex and multifaceted processes of worldwide economic, social, cultural and political expansion and integration which have enabled capital, production, finance, trade, ideas, images, people and organizations to flow transnationally across the boundaries of regions, nation-states and cultures."

While globalization can yield benefits, such as technological advancement, trade expansion, and economic development, it is also associated with costs, such as promotion of dependency of southern hemisphere countries on those in the north, repression of organized labor, and curtailment of workers' legal and social entitlements. Globalization can increase women's opportunities for employment and economic independence in developing countries. But the tendency of transnational firms to "outsource" their labor to nations with cheap labor and fewer regulations reduces women's employment opportunities in the West. Outsourcing also reinforces traditional gender hierarchies in developing societies by placing women in segregated and low-wage work, often in exploitative conditions where more liberal national policies concerning equal employment for women and reconciliation of work and family life are typically absent (Chow, 2003).

Viewed from the perspective of procedural justice, the voices of powerful investors drown out those of employees and communities in the developed and developing world. If this process continues, national social policies may well become irrelevant as employers find ways of transferring work to countries with minimal regulation. Interpersonal justice, as well as respect for human life and dignity, is consequently undermined, as the most vulnerable people in the global economy have few opportunities and no sense of entitlement to integrate work and family in the most basic of ways (Heymann and Earle, forthcoming).

A social justice perspective suggests that some form of international solidarity and a new ideology concerning perceptions of what is fair and just on a global scale is needed to reduce globalization's negative impact on gender equality and work-family integration. These developments may depend on changing perceptions of distributive justice between the rich and poor countries of the world as well as accepted standards of social justice in the integration of work and family. This is likely to involve evoking a principle of need before equality or equity can be conceptualized at this level, but this is unlikely to happen while powerful stakeholders consider it fair to value profits before people in the developed and developing worlds.

### **DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Theories help us understand what drives change. According to social justice theory, for fundamental change to occur, there must be a thwarting of a goal and a belief that this is morally indefensible (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998). To take social action, i.e., at a social and not just individual level, there is a need to perceive social injustice and have sufficient power and resources for success (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). We have argued that social comparison plays a crucial role in perceptions of justice, and that broadening the diversity of comparisons available may help to highlight gender and other social injustices and the feasibility of social action.

Social justice theory highlights the different possibilities offered by examining need, equality, and equity principles at family, workplace, societal, and global levels and the diverse interests that are served by competing perspectives. Most discussions of social justice focus on distributive justice, but we have argued that procedural and interpersonal justice perceptions are also important considerations in relation to work and family issues at the different levels.

This chapter illustrates how justice outcomes can result at one level of analysis from decisions made at another level. For example, public policy can impact gender equity in the family and employer policies, with implications for the integration of work and personal life. Cross level effects are rarely studied in empirical research, though such an approach is useful. For example, Kossek, Huber and Lerner (2003) demonstrated that mandating labor market activity as a government public policy was not effective as an isolated strategy to uphold employability over time, because of the need to take other levels of analysis into account, particularly poverty of residence. Our discussion also suggests that work-family linkages in industrialized societies should be examined within a broader social context and that governments may contribute in different ways to perceptions of equity and injustice and to sense of entitlement to support for the reconciliation of employment and family life.

In this chapter, we argued that social justice theory can be used effectively to develop and answer important questions concerning progress toward the integration of work and family in advanced industrialized societies. It promises to reveal important insights into the circumstances under which families come before profits, a gender equitable division of labor and rewards at home and in the workplace can be achieved, parents can feel entitled to take time off work for family reasons, and work organizations and governments are likely to change policies and practices to ensure a more fair allocations of work and family responsibilities.

Although space precludes a full exploration of the implications of this approach for practice, and much more research is needed, it is apparent that effective practice at each level of society needs to take account of what is perceived as fair at other levels. For example, policy at the national level, though important for changing sense of entitlement to gender equitable integration of paid work and personal life, is not sufficient without changes in workplace values and expectations, and the effectiveness of workplace initiatives in turn, depend on perceptions of justice at the family and societal levels.

Research has scarcely been used to explore the potential of justice theory to understand progress toward work-family integration. Future research from a justice perspective could examine the following questions, at all levels of social life, including the family level, the workplace level, the national/societal level, and the international level:

- (1) What particular social policies, and what particular flexible working practices already in place, are perceived as fair, normative, and feasible in different societal contexts and why? For example, do people feel more entitled to support to deal with childcare responsibilities but not elder care? The justice perceptions of policy makers and citizens in selected countries could be studied, including how fairness perceptions change over time.
- (2) Under what social circumstances do employees develop their own sense of justice and entitlement to work-family integration policies and practices; how can social comparisons with other countries, related to perceptions of feasibility and equality norms, affect individuals' sense of justice and entitlement? What are the relevant roles of social policy, national culture, and workplace socialization in shaping individuals' sense of entitlements to particular policies?
- (3) More research is needed on the impact of diversity. Who feels entitled to what and why? Does sense of entitlement vary cross-nationally across different subgroups (race, ethnicity, social



class), household type (single parent, dual-earner, single-earner) and what helps to explain these variations? To what extent are equity, fairness, and justice possible for those who are not white, middle class, native-born heterosexual individuals living in dual-earner marriages (Parker & Almeida, 2001)?

(4) How might a changing sense of entitlement toward workplace and government policies designed to promote work-family integration affect individual family members' sense of entitlement and equity in the family and the gender-based division of labor in the family?

(5) What are the driving forces behind the development and effective implementation of work-family policies at the workplace and nation-state level? This is an issue related to procedural justice, likely to increase our understanding of the circumstances under which gender equitable work-life integration might actually be realized. What aspects of traditional organizational culture serve as barrier to the development of these policies and how might this change?

(6) Why is there an "implementation gap" between policies and practices? If policies are considered fair, why are they not properly implemented and used - is there a mismatch between the equality, equity and need principles? What are employers', supervisors' and co-workers' viewpoints about "fairness", and how do these relate to the development and successful implementation of work-family policies, mandated by legislation or developed within organizations?

(7) What would help companies achieve "win-win solutions," whereby workforce productivity and work-life integration can both be achieved by changes in organizational cultures, policies, and practices that are perceived as fair by employers and employees in terms of distributive, procedural and interpersonal justice? What are the circumstances under which awareness of possible inequities (changes in perceptions of justice and entitlement) promotes social change?

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